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March 14, 2000

The Honorable William Cohen
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

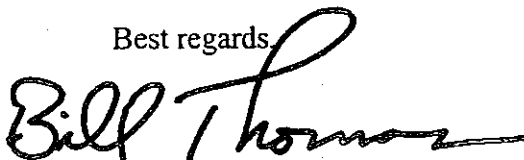
Dear Secretary Cohen:

It has come to my attention that the Department of Defense has issued a new policy that appears to prohibit the location of polling or voting sites on military bases as well as National Guard and military reserve facilities. According to election officials, many of these facilities have been used as voting sites for decades.

While it is important to ensure that such facilities are not used for partisan or political activities, why has the Administration chosen this time to prohibit the long-established use of such facilities for government-run voting sites that serve a critical public function? Shouldn't these sites be located so as to make it easier, not more difficult, for our men and women in uniform and their families to cast ballots?

I understand that many election officials are deeply concerned about this action taken by the Administration and I share their concern. Please respond as soon as possible with any information that you may have regarding this decision, including the number of voting sites that would be shut down under the Administration's new policy, so we can determine what further action may be necessary.

Best regards,



Bill Thomas

WMT: APS